

This week NCHS released a new report comparing maternal characteristics and outcomes for infants born to mothers in Appalachia, the Delta region, and the rest of the United States. The analysis used 2017 vital statistics natality data along with 2016–2017 linked birth/infant death data to compare infant outcomes such as preterm births, low birthweight, and infant mortality across the three regions overall and within categories of these maternal characteristics.

The study found that women giving birth in the Delta were most likely to be teenagers, unmarried, and not have a college degree, followed by women in Appalachia, and then by women in the rest of the United States. Infants born in the Delta were more likely to be born preterm or low birthweight and were also more likely to die in their first year compared to those born in Appalachia, while those born in the rest of the United States were the least likely to have these infant outcomes. 12.37% of infants born in the Delta were born preterm, compared to 10.75% of infants born in Appalachia, and 9.78% born in the rest of the United States. 10.75% of infants born in the Delta were born low birthweight, compared to 8.87% of infants born in Appalachia, and 8.14% of those born in the rest of the U.S. The infant mortality rate in the Delta was 8.17 infant deaths per 1,000 live births, compared to 6.82 in Appalachia and 5.67 in the rest of the U.S.

Thus, when comparing these regions, infants born in the Delta have the worst outcomes, followed by those born in Appalachia, and compared with those born in the rest of the United States.